LANL Recovery Act News Flash

Volume 2, Issue 6 June 2010

Visitors learn about MDA-B at open house

An open house in one of the enclosures erected for the excavation of Material Disposal Area B (MDA-B) gave more than 140 people the opportunity to learn about how the Lab's oldest waste disposal site will be cleaned up.

The open house on May 22 featured a number of displays, including a demonstration of the remote-controlled excavator that will be used to accomplish some of the work. Experts also were on hand to provide information and answer questions about how the contents of the site were analyzed and how the work will be done.

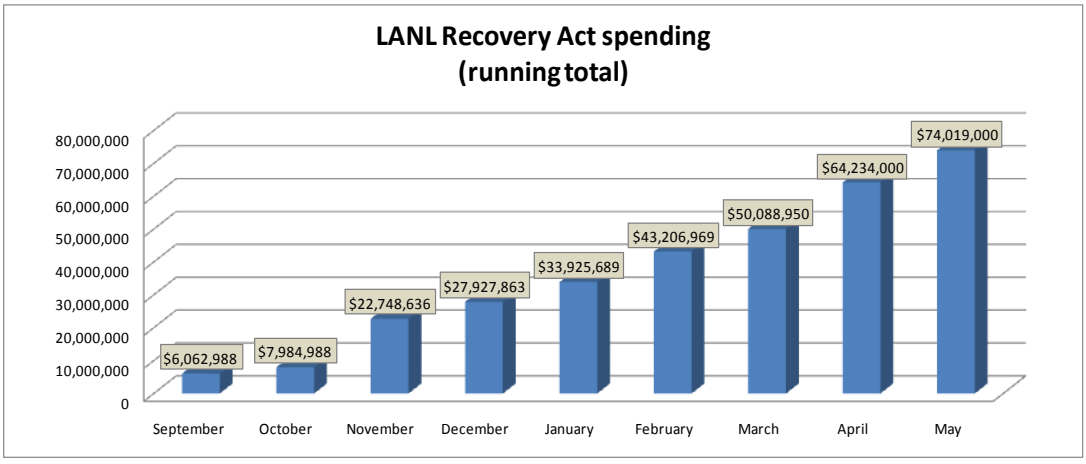
"We wanted to give the public a chance to come into one of the enclosures, receive accurate information about the project and ask questions," said LANL Recovery Act Executive Director Bruce Schappell. "We also wanted people to be aware of the safety precautions we're taking to protect workers, the community and the environment."

In addition to the remote control excavator, displays included fire and dust suppression systems, an air monitoring station, a waste container and a variety of radiological monitoring equipment and clothing.

Subject matter experts were on hand to answer questions and discuss how the work will be accomplished and the history of the Lab's oldest waste disposal site. Emergency preparedness personnel from Los Alamos County also were present to talk about emergency preparation procedures.

Excavation is expected to begin in late June and to be complete by the end of 2010.

Radiation Protection Manager Marty Peifer shows two young visitors to the MDA-B open house radiation detection equipment (top). Some of the excavation will be accomplished with a remote-controlled excavator (bottom).



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"Our goal is to decontaminate and decommission these buildings in the most safe, efficient and cost-effective manner possible."—Al Chaloupka, project director

More buildings scheduled to fall this summer

Ten of the 21 buildings scheduled for demolition at Technical Area 21 already have been razed, and more are scheduled to fall this summer.

The latest building to be demolished was the Tritium Systems Test Assembly (TSTA) facility, a 16,000-square-foot building that was the site of fusion research.

Next in line for demolition are buildings in the historic DP West complex. World War II weapons-grade plutonium and plutonium cores were processed at DP West until facilities could be built at other newly established weapons plants around the country. In addition, the nuclear devices used during early U.S. atmospheric tests, including Operation Crossroads, contained plutonium components from DP West.

DP West also was the site for non-weapons research of national significance. The development of plutonium-238 and plutonium-239 fuels at DP West led to new technologies that supported NASA space missions and nuclear energy research, most notably in the development of reactor fuels. DP West also was the center for the world's research on americium-241. The first gram of americium-241 was isolated at laboratory facilities in DP West.

The latest building demolished at Technical Area 21 with Recovery Act funds was the 16,000-square-foot Tritium Systems Test Assembly (TSTA) facility. TSTA is the tenth building to be demolished at TA-21.

Currently, crews are removing asbestos containing materials from buildings in DP West. Stripping equipment, fixtures and hazardous materials from buildings prior to demolition saves time and makes waste packaging more efficient and cost effective.

"Demolishing these buildings in the most efficient manner possible means the funding we save can be used to further clean up Technical Area 21," said Allan Chaloupka, project director. "Our goal is to decontaminate and decommission these buildings in the most safe, efficient and cost-effective manner possible."

Recovery Act funding will demolish about 175,000 square feet of buildings at TA-21.

Emergency siren installed as public safety precaution

An emergency alert siren has been installed at Material Disposal Area B (MDA-B) to alert the public in the unlikely event an incident should occur during excavation.

With excavation of MDA-B, the Lab's oldest waste disposal site, scheduled to begin in June, the siren was installed as a precautionary measure. The project team has worked closely with Los Alamos County emergency preparedness personnel, which tested the siren on May 26.

The excavation of MDA-B will occur within 13 sturdy metal structures. Should an incident such as an explosion or fire occur that cannot be contained within the structure, the siren will sound to alert businesses and residents located near the project to stay inside, shut off air intakes, and wait for the all-clear to sound.

"We do not anticipate an incident at MDA-B that cannot be contained within the structures," said Bruce Schappell, ARRA projects executive director. "We prefer, however, to take every necessary precaution to ensure worker and public safety."

An emergency alert siren has been installed at Material Disposal Area B. Working closely with the Los Alamos County Emergency Preparedness Department, the project team installed the siren as a precautionary measure.

This News Flash is provided by the Environmental Programs Directorate of Los Alamos National Laboratory.

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LA-UR 10-04167